

December 20, 2002

Julie Yokley
City Recorder
Post Office Box 173
Ethridge, Tennessee 38456

Dear Ms. Yokley:

Thank you for your telephone call on Wednesday letting me know about the Board's action regarding Mr. Johnson earlier this week. During our conversation, you asked me about the ability for the position of City Recorder to serve concurrently as City Administrator. The answer to your question is that it is permissible. Pursuant to the City's Charter, Section 6-21-102(a), "The city manager may combine, or personally hold, any such administrative offices herein or otherwise established, or may delegate parts of the duties of the city manager's office to designated subordinates." The position of City Recorder is established in the Charter, section 6-21-401. Therefore, the City's charter allows the combination of duties between City Manager and City Recorder.

However, there are several issues to consider before that decision is made. The first issue is separation of duties. In smaller cities, this is an obstacle, even under normal circumstances. The comptroller's office frowns upon audit reports that indicate the same individual is opening the mail, recording deposits, depositing cash and checks, writing checks and preparing the financial reports. If the two positions were to be combined in Ethridge, I would strongly recommend that the city hire a part-time person to perform some of these functions.

Another issue to consider is that once the positions are combined, it becomes nearly impossible to separate the individual from both positions. In other words, if the city decides to fire the city manager, then there is no going back to being a city recorder for that individual. It becomes an all-or-nothing proposition. Not only would that individual be out of a job, but also the City would be without a City Manager and a City Recorder.

One other consideration to keep in mind is customer service. If those two positions are combined into one, then there is only one person to staff city hall. There is no one to serve as back up. City hall would have to be closed during vacations and sick days and when there is city business to take care of outside of city hall. Again, hiring a part-time staff member would help in this situation.

One last consideration is a financial one. Assuming the Town combines the positions, and pays the recorder the manager's salary in addition to the existing recorder's salary, the Town will come out even. However, as previously mentioned, if the Town hires part-time help to assist in bookkeeping and covering absences, then this will be an added expense. Even if the Town pays the recorder half of the manager's salary, this will probably not be enough to cover the part-time help, as the manager's salary was rather minimal.

I hope this adequately answers your questions. Please let me know if you need additional information or assistance. I am always glad to help.

Sincerely,

Margaret Norris
Municipal Management Consultant